



NEWS RELEASE

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR DISASTER RELIEF EFFORTS

USDA Resources Include Assistance for Rural Housing, Community Facilities, and Businesses

WASHINGTON, June 16, 2008- Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr today announced that funding is available to individuals, and organizations recently hit by natural disasters in several states in the Midwest. The funds will go to areas that have been designated as Presidentially-declared disaster areas due to the impact of floods and tornadoes.

“USDA is encouraging residents and business owners to immediately apply for funding to help them to begin their recovery from these devastating storms,” Dorr said. “Rural Development has a number of programs that can be used by citizens to help them get back on their feet. These programs can literally assist in building a community from the ground up and we stand ready to help our fellow citizens in the affected states rebuild their communities and their lives.”

USDA Rural Development has grant and loan funds available to rural communities to provide housing and shelter, public safety, health care and community facilities and business recovery assistance. Areas that have been declared by President Bush as federal disaster areas will receive priority consideration during the application process. Under Secretary Dorr has directed USDA Rural Development staff in the affected states to work with citizens, state and local and other federal officials to explain the type of Rural Development aid that is available for displaced residents.

Housing Assistance. For the Rural Single Family Housing Guaranteed Loan program, Rural Development will expedite lender approval in the disaster areas and also expedite approval for access to the Guaranteed Underwriting Services, or GUS program. For the Direct Housing Loan

Committed to the future of rural communities.

“USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.”
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program, USDA Rural Development will offer streamlined loan processing to assure timely loan decisions for families hit by the disaster. Existing Direct SFH borrowers can contact the Centralized Servicing Center (CSC) at 1-800-414-1226 to discuss their loans. Agency Real Estate Owned properties that are vacant and habitable can be made available for lease through FEMA or directly to disaster victims.

Business Assistance. Under the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program grants are available for rural projects that finance and facilitate development of small and emerging rural businesses, help fund distance learning networks, and adult education and employment programs. Rural public entities (towns, communities, State agencies, and authorities), Indian tribes and rural private non-profit corporations are eligible to apply for funding.

Community Facilities and Infrastructure: Funds are also available for community assistance facilities such as rural schools, libraries, daycare centers, hospitals, fire and rescue and emergency centers, fire, and police stations, public buildings, medical and assisted living centers. Assistance is also available for community infrastructure such as water and waste water systems. All applications will be processed expeditiously as they are received in state Rural Development offices.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. Rural Development has invested more than \$90 billion since 2001 for equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. More than 1.7 million jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.